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S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

HIS EXCELLENCY

JOHN JEFFERIES, EARL CAMDEN,

LORD LIEUTENANT, PRESIDENT,

AND THE

M E M B E R S

OF THE

A S S O C I A T I O N

FOR

DISCOURTENANCING VICE, AND PROMOTING THE
PRACTICE OF VIRTUE AND RELIGION;

IN

ST. P E T E R ' s C H U R C H,

ON TUESDAY 22d MAY, 1798,

BY THE

RIGHT REV. THOMAS LEWIS O'BEIRNE, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY.

D U B L I N :

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1798.

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the *Association for discountenancing Vice and promoting the Practice of Virtue and Religion*, held in St. Peter's Vestry-Room, 24d May, 1798.

His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, President, in the Chair,

It was Unanimously Resolved,

On the motion of his Grace the Lord Primate, seconded by his Grace the Archbishop of Cashel,

That the Thanks of this Association be presented to the Right Rev. THOMAS LEWIS, LORD BISHOP of OSSORY, for his excellent Discourse preached this Day before the Association; and that he be requested to publish the same,

Signed by Order,



JAMES MAXWELL,
WILLIAM MATURIN, } Secretaries.

T O

HIS EXCELLENCY

JOHN JEFFRIES, EARL CAMDEN,

LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR
OF IRELAND,

P R E S I D E N T

OF THE

Association for discountenancing Vice, and promoting
the Practice of Religion and Virtue,

THIS

S E R M O N

Published by his Excellency's Command,

Is respectfully inscribed

By his Excellency's most devoted,

And most obedient,

Humble Servant,

T. L. OSSORY.

JOHN JEFFRIES, EARL CAMDEN

AND LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
OF IRELAND

P R E S I D E N T

OF THE

Association for disseminating Vice, and promoting
the Practice of Religion and Virtue



is respectfully inscribed

By his Excellency's most devoted

And most obedient

Humble Servant

T. L. OSSORY.

S E R M O N, &c.

NEHEMIAH, Chap. xiii. Verse 17.

*"Then I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and
"said unto them, What Evil is this that ye do?"*

THE Jewish people, after a long and oppressive bondage, were permitted by the Persian kings to return to their native land, and to rebuild their city and temple. It could scarcely be supposed possible, that under the immediate impressions of so severe a calamity, followed by so signal a deliverance, a people, who, in all their calamities, were taught to look to the wrath, and in all their deliverances, to the returning mercies of their God, should plunge at once into the same enormities by which their guilty forefathers had brought so much evil upon themselves and upon their city.—But it was in the character of this stiff-necked people, to forget as well the mercies, as the chastisements of their God. In the very first days of their restoration, they appear to have fallen into the same abuses and disorders to which their pro-

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phets had ascribed their sufferings and their captivity. They were the same *froward generation*; and it required the same zeal in their teachers to reprove, and the same exertions in their rulers to restrain and reclaim them.

Among the most active assertors of religion and the laws at this remarkable period, was Nehemiah. Nehemiah was himself a captive; but he had been advanced to one of the highest offices in the Persian court; and after having been chiefly instrumental under the divine Providence, in securing to his nation a continuance of the royal favor and protection, he was at length deputed to undertake its government.

In a plain narrative which he has left to posterity, he mentions the disorders into which the people were falling, and the means he employed to reclaim them. Although vested with supreme authority, yet in the reform of the abuses against which he *contended*, he sought for associates and assistants among *the nobles and the priests, and ministers of the temple, and the chief fathers of the people, who still trembled at the commandment of God*. With these he formed a solemn covenant, by which they respectively pledged themselves to *walk in God's laws, which were given by Moses, to do all the commandments of the Lord, and not to forsake the house of their God*. He supported them in all their exertions with the whole weight
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and influence with which he was vested, and sanctioned the whole in an assembly of the people, at which he presided, while *Ezra the priest, bearing the law before the congregation, arraigned them for their transgressions, and shewed them that because of them they could not stand before God.*

It is before a similar association, that I am this day to raise my feeble voice. It is by a similar union of all that fear God, and wish the safety of the state, that I am deputed to expostulate *on the evil* that is doing in the land.

It is true that your league did not originate, like the covenant of Nehemiah, in the seat of power, or the councils of authority. Feeble in its commencement, it scarce formed a hope that it could excite the attention of an age, rushing precipitately into all the extremes of irreligion and immorality. Humble and few in numbers, like the first propagators of that religion, the love of which glowed in their breasts, its first members entered on the arduous work they had undertaken with trembling and desponding steps. They were tempted to exclaim with the prophet, "*This is a rebellious people that will not hear the laws of the Lord: they say to the seers, see not, and to the prophets, prophecy not unto us right things, but prophecy unto us smooth things, prophecy deceit.*" Yet see what their zeal, and their perseverance have brought

to pass.—God, looking, we trust, with favor on their undertaking, and designing to crown it, finally, with success; added to their union daily accessions from among the numbers *whom he had reserved to himself, and who still trembled at the commandment of God.* In his own time, and in the ordinary means of his providence, he secured to them the countenance and support of the supreme authority of the land. In their chair, presides this day, the representative of majesty. Animated with their own spirit, and full of their own zeal in the cause in which he has united with them, he employs the most effectual means to discharge the high trust with which he is vested, by adding his powerful influence to a league formed for discountenancing vice, and promoting religion and virtue; and the hearts of these good men must burn within them while they see him surrounded by nobles and prelates, by legislators and magistrates, and by all the dignity, the opulence, and the talents, that compose this splendid audience.

This is a subject of our warmest congratulations on this fifth anniversary of our institution. You would not have excused me had I passed it unnoticed. It is calculated at once to comfort us for the past, and to animate us for what is yet to come.

But while we rejoice in the happy increase of our Association, we naturally turn our thoughts to the great objects which we all had in view, when we
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pressed forward to enroll our names amongst its members. While we survey the strength we can bring into the field, we naturally consider the state of the warfare in which we engaged, when we joined the ranks of those soldiers of Christ, who were the first to stand in the breach, and oppose the impious host that warred with heaven. Encouraged and supported, we can look our danger in the face. We can examine it under its most formidable appearances with a clear and steady eye. The more formidable we shall find it, with the greater unanimity, with the greater spirit and perseverance shall we act together in opposing it; and the more strenuous, ardent, and unremitting, shall be our efforts to "deserve a continuance of the divine assistance, and with that assistance to conquer,

As it is probable that some of those who compose the present audience may not understand the nature of your institution, or have adverted to the necessity that called for it, some preliminary detail is essential, to which I beg their attention,

In opening the dispensation of returning mercy to man through the gospel, it had pleased the divine Wisdom to select its instruments from among the poor, and men of low degree. To speak in the language of scripture, *it chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; it employed base things, and things that were despised, and things that are not, that is,*

things overlooked and cast aside, as if they were not in existence, to bring to *nought things that are* ; to silence the sages of Greece through the fishermen of Galilee ; to confound the pride of science, the arrogance of wealth, and the fastidiousness of rank and station, by the illiterate, the indigent, and the humble ; to put *all principality, and power, and might, and dominion*, under the feet of him who, in his life, *was despised and rejected of men*, and, in his death, *was numbered with the transgressors and malefactors*.

So willed the eternal Wisdom, and so it was done. From the stable of Bethlehem, and the mountain of Calvary, the humble and obscure propagators of the Christian faith issue forth, with assured and dauntless confidence, on their progress to that universal conquest, which their divine Leader had promised, and which they and their successors have, through him, atchieved. “ *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* ” Thus boundless is their commission ; equally boundless is their success. The banner of the cross waves on the same standard with the eagles of Rome. The haughty nations, who triumphed over those ensigns of the mistress of the world, bow in their turn to what had been the object of her execration, and her instrument of infamy. They renounce their fierce and sanguinary gods at the shrine of the Prince of Peace. The boundaries of the power they had subdued, form no barriers to the Christian conquests. A ray from the divine

vine light illumines the track of discovery, and the gospel prepares atonements to the new world for the miseries entailed on it by European ambition, and European avarice. *In every nation, and in every tribe, and wherever the footsteps of civilized man can be traced, is still daily accomplishing that splendid and soothing prophecy that predicted the fulness of time, when the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and all flesh should see together the glory of God.*

In our days, and in the center of the Christian world, a conspiracy has been formed to undo this work of God, and to bring back the state of things from which his blessed Son had rescued the human race. It makes its boast of inverting the order of the divine Providence to defeat the divine purposes. In opposition to the scheme of the gospel, it professes to make the *wisdom of the Greeks* triumph over the *foolishness of the gospel*; and, instead of the influence of the divine truth, ascending through the lower to the higher orders, it undertakes to proselyte the people to the principles and the morals of atheism through the ministry of the higher ranks.

This was not altogether the original plan of the * first founder of this impious sect. The lower ranks of life, whether for or against him, he held in equal

* Voltaire.

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contempt. With a sneer of impiety he was for leaving them the religion that was made for them, and the master that rose, and the apostles that were selected from amongst them.

The higher classes alone he recommended to the zeal of his first disciples and associates. He had looked through those classes in his own society, with a piercing and discerning eye. He saw the advantages which their daily increasing licentiousness must give him over a religion, which they could profess only to be condemned by it. He felt that he could not advance a single argument against its truths that would not be recommended by their passions, and enforced by their vices, and he therefore selected them for the first objects of his nefarious experiments.

But the success of his labors soon opened a wider field to his execrable ambition; and he had early gained associates *, who from their situation, and the habits of their youthful days, had been enabled to look more extensively into the wilds and fastnesses of vice and immorality, and to acquire a more competent knowledge of the resources they could supply towards the universal restoration of impiety and irreligion. If the dissolute and licentious manners of the upper classes gave an easy conquest over their

* D'Alembert, who was a foundling, and Diderot, a man of obscure birth.

faith, superstition with its kindred abuses, presented itself as another most powerful auxiliary to the new sect, and offered them conquests of no greater difficulty among the great mass of the people.

It would be a waste of time to enter into a detail of the abuses which has been, for ages, creeping into Christianity, and of which the first ministers of infidelity were thus invited to avail themselves, in carrying on their hostilities against Christianity itself. The people with whom they had to do, knew not how to distinguish between these abuses and the genuine doctrines and tenets of the gospel ; and when once their belief should be, in any one part, shaken, the whole fabric would be dissolved, and they would be left without faith. They had deposited their religion in the hands of their teachers. If once their confidence in those teachers were shaken, and they were led to suspect or condemn their ministry, they would have other guides to seek. Their minds would be prepared for the reception of every innovating spirit that might be abroad, disseminating opinions favourable to their passions, and seducing them by the removal of every restraint on their vicious and corrupt inclinations.

It was under these impressions that the first conspirators against Christianity proceeded, from their extensive conquests among the higher ranks, to their attack on the very lowest. Their philosophy had
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made its way into the universities and academies, and all the seats of polite learning. All who could receive a liberal education, had more or less imbibed its pernicious spirit. Principles of Atheism and habits of immorality became the fashion. To establish a character of being well bred, it was necessary to be as much ashamed of being suspected of religion, as in other days it would have been shameful to be suspected of infidelity. The very women of the higher ranks had become adepts in the new school. This was a leading object with the conspirators. They knew the influence which female manners ever must have on a society in any degree polished; and in no work of theirs did they so much glory, as in that monster of Christian days a female libertine, a female Atheist,

Thus they secured to themselves a general support amongst those who most powerfully sway the great body of the people, by their opinions, their influence, and their example. The next step was to make the system descend, and to accommodate it to the new objects of their atrocious zeal. What had succeeded in courts and palaces, and the habitations of grandeur and wealth, was to be tried under every humbler roof. The education of academies was to be adapted to the village school. The poison that in the higher ranks of literature had been concealed under learned compilations, philosophical essays, metaphysical disquisitions, and enquiries into the
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system and laws of nature : or that had been gilded over and made palatable in works of polished wit and refined humour, was in this humbler walk to be conveyed through the simple tale, the rustic jest, the seemingly artless narrative, or whatever other popular and familiar form promised most to attract and fix the attention of the unsuspecting inmates of the farm, the shop or the cottage.

But whatever form these Proteuses of impiety assumed, they uniformly accommodated their rudiments to all that was most mean, base, and vicious in degraded nature. Their care in compiling works of this tendency, could only be equalled by their indefatigable zeal in disseminating them among every class of the people. An association was formed for the express purpose, and it was composed of the most able and active of their missionaries.

We owe it to the industry of a respectable foreigner, himself among the victims of this flagitious conspiracy, that we are now perfectly acquainted with the formation of this association, with its principles, and the means it employed to produce this extensive mischief. What was before to be conjectured from effects—what was to be collected from the sufferings of Europe is, by this writer, proved from the most authentic and impressive documents—from the horror, the remorse, the repentant confession of persons actively employed in the plan.

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The object of this secret academy, as it was called, was to compose, print, and disperse popular writings against the doctrines and morals of Christianity. These they transferred to the hawkers and venders of pamphlets, to be sold at the lowest prices ; or they deposited them in the country schools, and in the hands of masters, chosen through the most active intrigues, for the purpose of poisoning the minds of the mechanics and peasants, and infusing into them principles subversive of religion, morals, and all civil order. Under this system, pursued for a series of years, the generation that had received any tincture of religious education, became, by degrees, almost totally extinct. A new race was formed, and trained in the contempt of every thing that had guided or restrained the ages before them ; and thus were nurtured and disciplined those ferocious and sanguinary bands that have desolated the finest portions of Christendom, and spread such misery among the works of God.

What a new light does this discovery throw on your institution? How conclusively does it evince to those who have been, hitherto, blind to their danger, not only the necessity of such an association as you have formed, but also the wisdom of such a plan as you have pursued? You searched for the remedy in the nature of the disorder. Where the poison chiefly operated, you administered the antidote. You no sooner perceived that the evil had
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approached your own shores, and that the agents of those who *had turned the world upside down had come hither also*, and that they were indefatigably employed in spreading their pernicious opinions among every class of our people, by the same means and through the same channels as in the mother country of infidelity and anarchy, than you resolved to counteract them through the same channels.

I will not say that the association despaired of the higher ranks of life, or that it altogether trusted for their correction to the effects of the vices which they too generally indulged, or the consequences of the contempt of religion, and all its ordinances, which they too generally discovered. The divine Justice was, elsewhere, executing severe retribution on that class of men. The evil they had principally contributed to produce, was pouring down its chief plagues upon their heads. From being the instruments of infidelity they had become its victims; and the people corrupted by their example, and debauched by their influence had, in the usual progress of sin, turned upon their tempters, and punished them by the very disorders into which they had been seduced by them.

With us the mischief was but beginning, and our higher ranks had the example of those unhappy sufferers to warn and to instruct them. The progress of their ruin had been brought distinctly, and in
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all its stages under their eye ; and to avoid their fate it was only requisite to reverse the system that had ended in their destruction. They saw that a vicious gentry necessarily produces a vicious people. The lesson was obvious.

But the lower classes became an immediate object of your care. The plague had already appeared to have made a destructive progress amongst them, and was discovering itself under every form of licentiousness and outrage. The specific means you employed to prevent the spreading of the infection ; the dissemination of the holy scriptures, and the continued stream of religious instruction which you poured into the cottages of the poor, and the schools of the trading mechanic, and labouring youth ; your improvements on that plain and simple mode of engraving Christian knowledge on the young and tender mind by catechetical instruction, that had proved so effectual, as well in the primitive days of the church, as since its happy reformation in these countries ; the public examinations, which through your recommendation have been established throughout the capital, and the premiums you provided to be distributed among the children who discovered the greatest proficiency ; your unceasing care to distribute through every part of the kingdom, tracts of the plainest and most popular forms, containing some practical display of the spirit you laboured to diffuse, and some example of the happy effects of the doctrines

trines you were anxious to enforce ;—these your meritorious and judicious labours, and whatever else is connected with that branch of your institution that regards the instruction of the public mind in the principles and morals of Christianity, have been ably and fully detailed on former occasions, and will be in a few days submitted to the public*. I shall only observe from this place, that if your funds had been equal to the zeal of the different committees employed in these works of charity, and if the co-operation of the agents essential to the success of such a plan, had been as general as the necessity that calls for it, there is every reason to think, that the happy fruits of your exertions would have been more obvious to the public eye, than we can now boast them to be. Much, however, has been done ; and we trust, from the increase of your numbers, and from a new infusion of zeal, you will be enabled effectually to improve this most important branch of your institution.

Many things contribute to encourage this hope, even beyond what you conceived on the first dawning of your success. New dangers, as they rise, call forth new exertions. The most inattentive and indolent will rouse themselves when they open their eyes to the perils that immediately menace them. While the horrible conspiracy, that is now revealed, was forming in the very heart of the Christian states, those amongst us who retained their Christian principles, however they

* See the account printed at the end of this Sermon.

violated them in practice, rested in security. They possessed the religion which they had inherited from their fathers, and they entertained no doubt but that they should transmit it as a legacy of benediction to their latest posterity. They perceived no proofs of a systematic plan to subvert it; and when they heard of the existence of such a plan from others, they either disbelieved the fact, or they thought it of no import to the society to which they belonged. They saw no danger but in the affected fears of an interested clergy, or the heated imaginations of a few lay fanatics, whose alarms only provoked wit, and whose expostulations only excited ridicule.

The conspiracy is now unfolded to them in all its terrors. They are convinced of its reality from proofs, that require no other marks of their authenticity, than the baneful effects of which they are themselves witnesses. They see it burst from the concealment in which it disguised its first plottings and machinations, and walking abroad in the face of day. They see it in the very heart of their own country, nursed in discontent, and matured into rebellion. They see it cast away all restraints of conscience and religion, all scruples and all remorse, and range through every part of the land with perjury and robbery, and murder and assassination in its train. The same facilities and encouragements from which the first apostles of Atheism and anarchy derived such advantages, in establishing their system

system in their own society, they see equally operating in favour of their disciples in this devoted land. The same contempt for religion advancing with rapid strides to open and avowed infidelity; the same superstition in which all the vices that are most congenial to infidelity, and that have the most natural tendency to coalesce and incorporate with it, nestle and engender themselves. What then remains? Is it not for our lives that these, the two most destructive scourges of the human race, should be resisted by an union and concord, and co-operation, equal, at least, in zeal, energy and extent, to the horrid conspiracy that has armed them once more against the peace of the world? Should not the miseries we have already suffered from their portentous alliance, and the ruin that infallibly awaits us from their final success, rouse all descriptions of persons,—Christians of all sects and all denominations, to unite with you in preserving what may yet remain untainted in the community, to God and to their country?

In what I have hitherto submitted to you, I have considered those parts of your institution that provide for the disseminating of the principles of the Christian religion, and of Christian morality, and for the education of the rising generation. The next great *evil* on which I am appointed to *contend* this day, and against which you have associated, is the profanation and abuse of the sabbath, ending in other countries

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in the entire abolition of the ordinance, and threatening it in this.

Of all the abuses peculiar to our day, I will not hesitate to class this amongst the most dangerous and fatal ; for I know of none that is so general and obstinate. The wisdom of the legislature enforces the injunctions of religion. The magistrate by coercion and punishment, and the ministers of the gospel by exhortation, by admonition, by reproof, are enjoined to secure the regular observance of the Lord's day ; but neither law nor religion are effectual against the general degeneracy. An open and scandalous neglect of the public service, and an unblushing violation of every other ordinance enjoined on the sabbath, has become the characteristic reproach of our days. To despise and set them at nought is the creed of the infidel, and the practice of the nominal believer. We leave it to these two descriptions of persons, to ascertain between themselves their respective proportions of guilt ; but to their guilt I am bold, in a very great measure, to ascribe as well that contempt for every thing connected with religion, and that dissoluteness and licentiousness of manners, that distinguish our higher classes from those of former days, as that proneness to disorder, riot, and insubordination, that arms the lower classes against the peace and prosperity of the land.

If I had neither the word of God, nor the nature of the ordinance to warrant these assertions, I have the living example, the actual experience of our own days, to prove both the happy effects of a strict attention to the duties and the ordinances of this day, and of the fatal consequence of the neglect of them.

There never has been a Christian people, among whom the rest of the sabbath has been better understood, nor the observance of it, with all its ordinances, more regular, steady and uniform, than the people of England, from the period of the reformation. From the very first days of that auspicious æra, we can discover the public solicitude on this important point. It arrested the attention both of king and parliament; and various regulations, formed in the true spirit of Christian piety, and all tending to secure the great objects for which the Lord's day was set apart, adorned their statute books. The spirit that influenced these original restorers of true religion, outlived every subsequent revolution in the state. The impression it left on the public mind, sunk deep and durable into the national character; and even to this day it is among the peculiarities that distinguish that nation, and that attract the attention of strangers who visit them.

I do not speak altogether of the capital. In all places of such promiscuous, fluctuating, and boundless resort, the national character is often lost in a conflux and mixture of whatever is imported from

abroad most vicious and corrupt, or is most degenerate and unnatural of domestic production. I do not even speak of those places of extensive manufacture and commerce, to which most of these observations may, in their degree, be applied; and still less do I speak of those particular circles, in which the adoption of foreign manners and customs, changing with every tide, leaves no trace of the original, indigenous disposition, and where an equal indulgence in every description of profaneness and vice levels all distinction, as well in rank and situation, as in manners. What I speak of is that body of the people, spread over the country, that has least admitted those intermixtures that change the feature and complexion of the original race—That aggregate, in which alone we are to look for the peculiar and characteristic marks that distinguish one nation from another. It is among them, I contend, that, in England, the decent and orderly manner in which they devote the sabbath to its original purposes, forms the most striking contrast with all the nations around them. In some instances, it will not be denied, the sabbath is even there profaned. Avarice, and a thirst of gain, will, even there, sometimes break through the restraints of law and religion. The thoughtless, the volatile, and the vicious, among the wealthier and higher classes, and the desperately profligate among the lower will, even there, on some occasions, and in some places, engage in amusements or pursuits inconsistent with the solemnity of the festival, and destructive of its spirit and tendency.

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But the impression which such examples produce on the general feeling, serve only to confirm the general character, and secure to this people their national boast.

It is for this, among other causes, that one of the most devout and distinguished prelates of their church asserts, that the English people are naturally religious. Naturally religious they continue to this day; and it is in this great ground work of their character that we are, principally, to search for those deep rooted principles, that stubborn conviction, that firm and unshaken mind, that have so successfully resisted the torrent of impiety and anarchy, that, for so many years past, has been overwhelming the nations around them, and threatening the destruction of the religion of their fathers, and of the laws framed in its spirit. Profelytes to that irreligion, and deserters to that anarchy have, indeed, appeared amongst them. They have not been without some experience of the attempts of daring incendiaries, to introduce among them the crimes and the horrors, which have terrified the whole religious and civilized world. But these attempts have only served to awaken the general spirit, to manifest the general disposition, and to exhibit the great bulk of the nation rising with the strength of a giant, in defence of the general interests of Christianity, and of all social order throughout the earth. Struggling with difficulties, which they alone are equal to, they have, with very few exceptions, maintained within themselves that peace and that order which peculiarly be-

long to a Christian people ; and from the overflowing of their commerce, and the exuberance of their industry, they drew the means of enabling other nations to check the destructive progress of the disturbers of the world, until it has pleased God to interfere in his over ruling councils, before which we must bend with trembling submission, and to leave them to carry on the awful contest, supported only by their reliance on him.

If from the consideration of this people we turn our eyes to another nation, we shall be struck with the most marked contrast, elucidating the present subject of our enquiry, that the history of mankind can exhibit. An open contempt for the religion of Jesus Christ, its ministers, and its ordinances, had long distinguished the higher orders in France. This contempt was in nothing more conspicuous, than in their profanation of the sabbath day. They held it not enough to devote it to the same round of pleasure and amusements which occupied the week. They selected it for the most complete desecration ; for the more immediate service of dissipation, luxury, and revelling. The most splendid assemblies, the most crowded theatres, the most sumptuous entertainments, distinguished every return of the day. This was the etiquette of the court ; this was the fashion with all who had any pretensions to rank, or place or distinction ; and the example was but too faithfully copied by every inferior class. From a ser-

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vice of a few moments, run over in an unknown language, or from a theatrical display of pompous ceremonies, without edification or instruction, they proceeded to the dance, to the loose and wanton intercourse, to the drunken rout. Every street and every village was filled with noise, with song, with intemperance. Instead of a Christian festival, a stranger would suppose himself engaged amidst the orgies of the antient deities of revelling and debauchery. Placed in its fairest and least disgusting light, it was that scene of "mismanaged merriment" described by our sublime and pious poet, when in the Pagan ritual, "the pipe and flute, and wanton dance" were the offerings of thanksgiving for the bounty of heaven, and the festival consecrated to the Deity was distinguished by the encreased dissoluteness of his worshippers. Such were the scenes which the whole kingdom exhibited on the sabbath day, evidently prognosticating that state of national Atheism and infidelity, to which they almost instantly passed; and preparing them, by an easy transition, for the acceptance of those Heathen doctrines, and the celebration of those Pagan rights, which their law-givers and leaders soon prescribed to them.

Would to God I could find no other contrast to the English sabbath than this, which I have too faithfully described. But you, each of you, feel that within your own breast, that sadly and despondingly anticipates all I can have to add. For to which of
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you can it be a doubt, that in drawing this picture, so disgusting to the eye of every Christian, I have not traced an outline too shockingly resembling the sabbaths of this land.

Where there might be a difference in finishing that part of the piece that takes in the lower orders, I fear it would not be much in our favour. I fear it would require much blacker colouring to paint the sabbathical occupations of that class amongst us, and the effects of their sabbathical revelling and intoxication, than of that gay and volatile people, before they came, laterly, to throw off every sense of humanity as well as religion.—Would you push this melancholy subject further? Would you look to that people, even in their present unexampled degeneracy? Will you find, even there, no resemblance? What are those associations for treason and rebellion? for plunder and rapine? for assassination and massacre? Is this no resemblance? Has not the sabbath been the day devoted, as if by preference to these atrocities, and to the conspiracies in which they originated? and has not the repose which the Author of our being stipulated in kindness and mercy for man, been desecrated to the perpetration of the most horrid deeds that ever disgraced humanity?

What can we, *your* pastors and teachers, do to stop this evil? Where it most universally prevails is without the pale of our ministry. The energy of government,

ment, and the rod of the law may reach it; but the voice of the ministers of your church cannot. If the magistrate be negligent, or the executive power indifferent to it, we may lament, but we cannot redress. It is not open to us to supply their place among the great bulk of the people, even by exhortation. This lies with the clergy of other denominations, by whom we are surrounded. To accuse them of neglecting so sacred a point of their duty might be an injustice; for if want of success were a proof of that neglect, how forcibly might the accusation be retorted on ourselves?—In one particular they are certainly more successful than it is in our power to boast. Their places of devotion are at some period of the day resorted to by all who join in their communion. This, it will be said, is the effect of superstition, denouncing the punishment of damnation against all who absent themselves from what is called the sacrifice of the mass. But what is this but to acknowledge, that the voice of superstition is more powerful with its votaries, than all the injunctions of our pure and reformed church, urging and inculcating the commandments of God to those who take a pride in being members of that church.

Well, indeed, might they take pride in this. It is a proud distinction. It is approaching nearer that sublime and perfect form of religion contained in the gospel, and professed by the primitive disciples of Christ, than is elsewhere to be found in the Christian world.

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But to take a pride in the name, to be ready to spill their blood for the distinction, and yet to yield to no one impulse of the spirit it breathes, and yet to neglect and appear to condemn every duty and every ordinance it prescribes, is among not the least striking paradoxes of these strange days.

They boast of it as of the religion of their forefathers; let them look back to their days. Let those who have received the tradition of their characters and their customs, compare the present state of our reformed church throughout the kingdom, with what it was in those times. In what part of it are we now to look for that regular observance of the sabbath, and that regular attendance on the service of God, to which the higher classes of the Protestants led the way, and the lower followed. In what church, out of the precincts of the seat of government, are we now to look for the members of the great constituted authorities and establishments of the state? for those who mix in his Majesty's councils? for the nobles and high commoners, the framers of our laws? for the great and dignified judges, the dispensers and interpreters of those laws? or the learned practitioners, from whose benches these venerable personages are selected? Where are we to look for those wise and revered magistrates, who, while they took care to prevent the profanation of the sabbath in their respective districts, regularly filled the seats, which the pious munificence of those days separated and distinguished for their recep-

reception ;—who made it a conscience to set an example of obedience to the laws which it was their particular province to enforce, and in the habits of their office exhibited the ensigns of their authority in the house of the Sovereign Judge of mankind, while, with the great body of the people, they prostrated themselves before his throne, to implore the assistance of his grace in “executing justice and maintaining truth ?” All these, the natural supporters of religion, would, in the days of your ancestors, have thought it a shameful dereliction of their post, and a high breach of their duty and allegiance, to have absented themselves from the great congregation of the faithful. The same might be said in general of all who possessed rank, or wealth, or consequence, and who owed example. But where is the minister of God now to look for them ? In vain will he explore the deserted aisles and empty benches of our churches. Old and young, they are all engaged in far different pursuits. With the great apostle of infidelity they leave us, and our ministry, and our ordinances, and our exhortations, to those for whom our religion was made ; or they content themselves, like they money maker in the satirist, with deputing the female part of their families for that service, as if to offer to God the insult of a vicarious homage ; or as if our religion was only made for our women.

If from the inside of our churches we direct our eyes without doors, what mortifying spectacles still present

present themselves to us. We see the higher classes acting in contempt of every law, divine and human, which, even in a worldly light, they are chiefly interested to have duly observed. We see them running the same round of dissipation and amusements to which they devoted the week; not allowing themselves, as a zealous prelate of our church expresses it, even one day's rest from the *fatigues* of pleasure. We see the same display of levity, and vanity, and parade in our streets; and in our houses the same costly and sumptuous entertainments; the same dull, listless, insipid circles, plodding round a card table; or the same giddy, volatile, dissipated crowds of both sexes, that are incessantly toiling to get rid of themselves, and incessantly in chase of that amusement that as incessantly flies from them,

How is it among the trading classes, and all who live by their traffick? Do they profit either of the repose or the leisure of the sabbath, for any of the purposes for which it was designed? Do they avail themselves of that solitary opportunity for instruction, or for the more immediate attention to the claims of religion, which their state may allow them? No. They convert it into a day of extraordinary exertion: They take the advantage of the assembling together of the lower orders to swell their gain. They profit of their little wants to encrease the price they extort from them. They tempt them with whatever can corrupt their morals, or destroy their health;

health ; and turn the purlieus of every house of prayer into a market, a shamble, or a drinking house.

What street or what road is not obstructed with their wares and their merchandize ? Where can the eye of a Christian fall, without seeing crowds of those unfeeling wretches, who stand between the goodness of God and his creatures, and deny the poor animals by whose services they live, the rest which their Maker had stipulated for them, by the merciful ordinance that secured to them also the repose of the sabbath ?

As one of the beneficent objects of the stated repose of this day, was to provide for the ease and refreshment of the labouring classes, and those who live chiefly by the sweat of their brow, it might be expected that they, at least, would gladly and thankfully turn to profit the kindness of their heavenly Benefactor. No ; they would think the miseries, of which they complain, aggravated, if they also did not join in the general profanation. They exhibit the abuse in its most disgusting forms. If they rest on the sabbath, it is a rest from honest industry and useful occupation, that they may labor in every work of sin and immorality. Instead of recruiting, they exhaust their strength. They waste the wretched pittance acquired by the sweat of their brow during
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the week, in drunkenness and debauchery, and sow the seeds of disease and premature debility in their constitutions, by swinish intemperance. They fill the streets with riot, and their own wretched cabbins with all that can destroy domestic peace and quiet. In short, they either practice, or fit themselves for the practice of all the excesses, against which the rigors of the law, and the strong hand of power, now become, from necessity, doubly strong, are inadequate to protect our society.

Is this description exaggerated? I will boldly carry my appeal to the conviction and experience of every one who hears me, and ask him if such be not the scenes exhibited in every street, at every sign post, wherever the young and the old meet together on the sabbath, corrupting and corrupted? *Shall not the land tremble for this?* Is it possible? Is it consistent with the justice of God, and his all-ruling providence, that such a people should long escape his punishments? Shall we be surprised if it *shall be as with the mean man, so with the great man?* If the contagion extends to all ranks and conditions; and if, seduced by the example of the higher orders, and imitating and adopting their neglect and contempt of the most sacred ordinances of our religion, which will necessarily lead them to licentious ignorance and vicious poverty, the common people should proceed to throw off all restraints, and to break out into all those excesses that desolate
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other lands, universally immoral, and universally irreligious*.

To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? says the prophet Jeremiah, lamenting a similar infatuation among the people he was labouring to reclaim, *Who is the wise man that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of God hath spoken, that he may declare for what the land perisheth?* You have spoken, my brethren of the Association; you have raised your voice again and again. You have warned, as from *the mouth of God*, all who ought to be *wise and understand for what it is the land perisheth*. Like Nehemiah, you have contended with *the nobles and rulers*, and said unto them, *What evil is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?* In the very first days of your institution, you made a solemn appeal to the magistrates to interfere with their authority—you made a solemn appeal to the ministers of the gospel, to co-operate with their exhortations, and to the people to open their eyes to their own interests, and to consult their own comfort and happiness. But alas! of our blindness and our infatuation! the insatiable thirst of gain, and the shameless front of dissipation and profligacy, and the daring and disgusting cravings of debauchery and intemperance, and the apathy, the listlessness, the

* Alas! within how very few hours did we see all this come to pass!

cold and torpid indifference of mere professional Christianity, defeated all your efforts with reason and religion, and the laws of the land and the ordinances of God to enforce them. Still, and on the very brink of destruction, the fashionable world pleads its own rules, its own customs, its own privileges, as setting them above the remonstrances and exhortations of their clergy. Still the miserable tradesman, unmindful of all dependance on the sovereign Disposer of all things for his success in life, pleads his avarice and lust of gain, in opposition to the Divine command. Even drunkenness and intemperance find their charitable and humane advocates: We are stunned with hearing of the necessity of allowing the lower classes to indulge themselves, as it is termed, one day out of seven: to *indulge* themselves in destroying their health, in robbing and impoverishing their families, in endangering the public safety and peace!

But you have not been dispirited, nor cast down. You have not relinquished the cause in despair. Within these very few days you have called forth all the talents, all the zeal, all the piety, all the fervor you possess, to make one general effort more to *contend with the nation*, that we may *put away this evil thing* from among us: You have appealed to the Chief authority, against those parts of the abuse which the interference of authority can alone correct. The hopes you are warranted to conceive from that appeal, and the grounds of those hopes, I am deterred by this presence

sence from expressing. But, with you, I can exult in them. With you I can rejoice in the prospect, that our religious feelings will be no longer wounded by seeing the magistrates overlook and tolerate the scandalous infringement of those laws, which they bound themselves by oath to support. That the proclamations of the chief city magistrate, laudably co-operating with your zeal, will no longer be suffered by those whose duty it is to see them executed, to remain as waste paper, filling the column of a news-letter, but never emptying the streets of the nuisances they point out for punishment and correction. That those receptacles of drunkenness, intemperance, and lewdness, to which we can trace so much of the crimes and enormities that shake the state, and endanger the quiet and the safety of the private circle, shall no longer be suffered to throw open their pestilential doors on the sabbath, the day on which they are most greedy for their prey, either to those who practice, or to those who invite temptation. That the ears of the pious and devout shall no longer be stunned, nor the voice of the minister of the gospel be drowned by the din of arms, or the noisy array of military bands, parading your streets in the very hour of divine service, as if in mockery of the cause for which they took up arms. That in the awful progress of the high court of justice through the land, (O God, that this should be amongst the evils against which we are to contend!) the ordinances of religion shall no longer be publicly tram-

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pled on, by men who bear the tremendous commission of deciding on the lives of God's creatures; and that the example of despising the laws, shall no longer be set by those who are appointed to interpret, dispense, and assert them.—These are abuses, melancholy to think! that are too powerful for any thing but the hand of authority; and to that you have assigned them with every hope of success.

From the heads of the clergy, and the whole body of the officiating members of the established church, you naturally anticipated the most zealous and earnest exertions. Although not all received members of your union, they must necessarily be your *fellow labourers in Christ*. They have the same love; they must be of one accord and one mind with you. Through them, therefore, as through the natural channel, you wished to communicate with the body of the people, and the means you have adopted can scarce fail of success. By suggesting a settled plan of proceeding to each of them individually, under the authority of their bishop, and to be by them proposed to their respective flocks, you have the surest prospect of extending the circle of your pious zeal, at one and the same moment, over the whole face of the kingdom. You animate the exertions of the clergy, by shewing them the authority by which they are exhorted to act, and the support on which they can rely; and such of them as might despair of their single efforts, will look forward to a well-grounded hope

hope of success, from the general combination in which he is invited to take his part.

Nor are you without your encouragements from the higher classes of the community, whom you have so eloquently and so forcibly addressed on this most important subject. The perverseness and obstinacy of man cannot always resist the omnipotence of mercy. *While the judgments of the Lord continue so long in the earth, he must learn righteousness.* The interchangeable providences by which our heavenly Father works on his children, in the chastisements with which he threatens them, and the deliverances he accomplishes in their favour, cannot always be overlooked and contemned. Who can be ignorant, who can be insensible of what has been, or what is passing amongst us? On what a precipice we stood? What conspiracies and combinations, advancing secretly and silently, but securely and rapidly, to their execution, have been brought to light? Did we not touch the very brink of our destruction? Were not the sanguinary leaders ready to take their posts? Were not the instruments of slaughter prepared? the movements combined? the signal expected? *As the bird escapes out of the snare of the fowler, the snare is broken, and we, I trust, are escaped.* Their machinations are enfolded, their plans disconcerted, their treasonable and sanguinary projects counteracted; and the mischief they devised recoils on themselves.

Justice has seized their chiefs, and the sword of the law is ready to start from its scabbard, to avenge the cause of religion and humanity*. Shall not the danger at length produce seriousness, and the deliverance gratitude? Is it in levity, in thoughtlessness, in dissipation, to be insensible to these repeated warnings from heaven?—is it in any thing short of that open infidelity, that spirit of confirmed and hardened irreligion, which ought, exclusively, to belong to the traiterous disturbers of our peace, and to those monsters of perfidy and cruelty with whom they were prepared to associate, for the plunder and devastation of their native land—is it in any thing short of these to continue inattentive to the divine procedure? to continue to insult the sovereign Arbiter of our destiny, who is as strong to punish, as he is mild and merciful to save, to transgress his laws, condemn his ordinances, and neglect his worship and his day?

No; *come out of them*, (for thus would I address those of this class, who stand in need of such exhor-

* Never may that signal Providence be forgotten, that led to the detection and imprisonment of these men! Melancholy as have been the scenes which we have witnessed since this discourse was delivered, it is easy to conceive how their horrors must have been heightened, had these heads of the impious conspiracy been sitting in the capital, with all their counsels matured, their movements combined, and all the energies brought to act together, which they had so fatally provided against the bursting of their plot.

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tation, if they would but hear my voice) *come out of them*, all ye to whom we anxiously look for that example that will most effectually atone for the mischiefs, on which it is our indispensable duty to expostulate with you. If ye still profess the name of Christ; if ye are not prepared to renounce the faith of your fathers; if ye are not prepared to renounce the consolations of the religion into which ye have been baptised, for the gloomy and desperate resources of infidelity and Atheism; if you have not resolved wantonly to encourage, or blindly and thoughtlessly to wait the chance of all those horrors with which you are menaced, both by your foreign and domestic enemies, *come out of them*, that ye be not considered by the righteous Judge of the earth to be *partakers of their sins*, and that ye *receive not of their plagues*, for *their sins have reached unto heaven, for God will remember their iniquities*. Leave to them the callous heart, the desperate daring obstinacy that harden themselves against the terrors of the divine displeasure. Be not you ashamed to acknowledge, if not by your declarations, at least by your practice, the error of your past ways. If you have led away God's people by your example and influence, from sanctifying his sabbaths, from observing his ordinances, teach them also to return to him, *in these days of tribulation, when all these things*, the necessary consequence of your common guilt, *are coming upon them*. See if your influence will not be as effectual to reclaim as
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to corrupt, to promote the practice of religion and virtue, as of irreligion and vice.—Make the happy experiment, join in the religious league that has been formed amongst you, and range yourselves among those nobles and rulers, *and fathers of the people, who yet tremble at the commandments of God.* You have the example of those of your own class, in your sister country, to encourage and determine you in this salutary resolution. We have the gravest and most respectable authority, received within these few days, to say, that numbers of the highest rank and consequence, are there daily entering into a similar union. Awakened by their situation, and by a feeling of *the judgments of the Lord now abroad upon the earth*, they have not been deterred by the abuse or the ridicule, the scoffs or the misrepresentations of the abettors of impiety and anarchy, from giving to the world this and other proofs of their sense of religion and piety, and of what they owe to their God.

An imitation of foreign manners, and a long enjoyment of worldly pleasures, producing thoughtlessness and levity, and dissipation, had seduced many from their religious duties, and their veneration for the service and ordinances of God: the ministers of the gospel remonstrate and exhort, and they are the first and the most earnest to croud to the churches, and join with the faithful in deprecating the judgments which their sins might have provoked. The profligate votaries of pleasure had encouraged the
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managers of the public entertainments to insult the national manners, and to offend the chaste eye of a grave and sober people. The minister of religion remonstrates, and the abuse is removed. The great and the opulent, through their different gradations of rank and wealth, had, in many instances, abused the blessings of Providence ; they had lavished their fortune in pomp, in ostentation, in entertainments disproportioned to their reduced incomes, or unbecoming the public distress. The voice of religion and of their country call upon them, and they obey. They rise to the dignity of yielding to their situation. They contract, they retrench, they simplify their tables and their establishments ; they œconomise.—The example descends to every station and degree ; and the savings of the humblest families are poured into the treasury of the state, for the defence of their laws and their religion. Illustrious people ! must we ever be content to applaud, but never imitate them ? Must our feelings ever appear to be rather those of a consciousness of impotence to follow them in their career of virtue and glory, than of a noble ambition to emulate what we admire ; to aspire to a union with them in character, as we formed a union with their interests, and to share with them in the applause of men, and the favor of heaven ?

The last leading branch of your institution, which remains to be considered, is the reform of the criminal poor, and the education of their unhappy offspring.

spring. But I will not anticipate this important subject. You will appoint it its own day ; and you have committed it to the talents of one of your members, who will do it ample justice. I shall only observe, that the funds of the Association have hitherto proved altogether ineffectual, to carry on that favourite object of their zeal and attention, on the scale which they originally proposed. I therefore trust, that the first proofs we shall perceive, of our having been all thoroughly awakened to a feeling of our situation, and a sense of what God and men require of us under our present trials, will be a full attendance on the day appointed for this charity, a charity as beneficial to the peculiar society to which we hold, as it is interesting to humanity, and dear to religion.

There are several less marked objects that form part of your original design, but I have already trespassed much too long on the patience of my hearers, in detailing the great leading branches of it ; and these lesser objects are all, in some degree, included in them. I shall, therefore, only beg your further attention to some of the many general considerations that crowd on my thoughts, as I hasten to conclude.

One great advantage which you have derived from the discoveries of time, since you first associated, I have already noticed. The conspiracy against Christianity, and against the system of government, emanating

nating from its spirit, and resting on its principles, has been detected, and exposed to the world.

You stood in no need of those late discoveries; you traced this conspiracy to its first rise; you followed it in its progress, and on its first approach to your shores, you formed a league to defeat it. But how few believed your report? What inconsiderable aid did you at first propose to yourself? and how disproportioned to the multitudes that are deeply interested in your success, are even your present numbers? Every day's discovery lessens this difficulty. The danger is not only seen under all its deadly forms, and in all its exterminating extent, but the principal points of attack, the very weapons of our adversary, are known to us all.

These are signal advantages in the warfare in which we are engaged. They from whom, under heaven, we expect our most effectual aid and support, are not only awakened into a sense of their situation, but have their very plan of defence traced out to them. They see the prudence and the necessity of rallying round the standard which you have raised for them. They find that it is not only in averting the physical danger, that the bonded and associated energies of the state are necessary, but that they are equally necessary to avert the moral danger, from which the physical danger borrows its chief terrors, and its most formidable shapes. It is now known and acknowledged,
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that to crush the system that has convulsed the world, it is not sufficient, to employ against it the arm of force. We may be victorious in the field, but the victory will end with the triumph. Its fruits will not be nearer our grasp. Our enemies' magazine of arms, their funds, and their resources, the great sinews of their power, and their nursery of soldiers, still remain. The war they wage is in its commencement, its progress, and its success, a war of opinions, a war of principles. Our grand plan of operation must be to put down those opinions, to exterminate those principles. We must attack them in their schools of vice and infidelity : we must cut off those communications, by which they debauch the minds of our people from their duty and their allegiance ; we must rescue the public mind from their deceptions, and their fallacies, and their sophistry, and their perverted refinements, that, with the daring pretensions of meliorating, debase, and brutify, and enslave " human nature." In a word, if we wish to accomplish their final conquest, and their total destruction, we must bring back the great body of our people, to the principles and sentiments of Christianity, and to the re-adoption and practice of Christian morality, from which it has been so extensively seduced. This should be the business of the politician, as well as the ecclesiastic ; of the ministers of the state, as of the ministers of the church. This, the original object of your union, and at all times intimately connected with order and good government,

ment, is now become a question of the cabinet. It essentially mixes itself with all the leading measures, it is intimately connected with all the necessary resources of administration; and, thus, an Association, that originated in the humble and weak hands of a few private individuals, now imperiously demands the care, and the attention, and the co-operation of those who wield the powers, and direct the energies of the nation.

Nor are these your only incitements to persevere; nor these your only encouragements. You derive from the very nature of your institution, sources of unfailing support. It offers you the most positive earnestness of final success, were all but inspired by your example. In the course of little more than fifty years, we have seen the conspiracy which I have detailed to you, originally consisting of four men*, subvert, throughout a great portion of the Christian commonwealth, religion, morals, social order, whatever was most deeply rooted in principles, or cherished by prejudices,—every thing in which, from nature, reason, and experience, man had sought for his chief happiness, and comfort, and enjoyment in this passage, to his abode of higher hopes. What then may we not expect from an Association, formed for the best purposes of our nature? formed of the virtuous, the pious, and the devout? having in its favor the prayers of all good men, and the hope of the protec-

* Voltaire, the King of Prussia, D'Alembert and Diderot.

tion of heaven? What may we not expect from such an Association, towards the support and maintenance of those blessings which flow to society, wherever the gospel continues to exercise the influence of its faith and morals; or towards their recovery, where that faith has been shaken, or those morals corrupted or debased? Only let those on whom we call for countenance and assistance, on whom we principally call for **EXAMPLE**, perceive and be convinced that we are ourselves in earnest; that we only require of them what we ourselves perform; that the knowledge which we are anxious to communicate to others, we are studious to acquire ourselves; and that we exhibit in our own lives the practice we recommend. Only further, let them have proofs that those of your members who have actively devoted themselves to the great objects of the institution, persevere in their efforts, and merit their support. One thing I can assure them from this place—these active members are numerous, zealous, indefatigable, fitted for the work.

It is a common prejudice, that religion is the exclusive business of the clergy. The distinguished characters from among the laity, who have entered into this Association, are not of that opinion. They agree with the Newtons and the Lockes, the Boyles and the Hales, the Wests and the Lyttletons, the Nelsons and the Wilberforces. They are happy to see an

an order of men, peculiarly set apart for the preservation and extension of their religion. They rejoice to see them set forth "its true and lively word," administer its sacraments, enforce its injunctions, apply its consolations. This they consider, not only as the requisite of their spiritual character, but as the chief service and fealty which this body of men owe to the state, for the splendid establishment it has secured to them. But religion itself, these distinguished characters claim as equally their own; they claim it as the great instrument of tranquillity, order and prosperity to the society in which are centered all their domestic blessings; they claim it as their chief consolation, when infirmity, disease, or sickness, "the thousand ills to which mortality is heir," assail them; they claim it as their chief support under reverses and calamities, in an age of strange and extraordinary revolutions, and the pledge and security to which they look forward, with trembling but strong hope, to their happiness in a life that is never to end.

Seeing religion in this light, these great and worthy men are of opinion, that they ought not to yield to any descriptions of persons, in promoting and securing what is so peculiarly interesting to them, both as creatures of time, and as probationers for eternity. To this they are of opinion that they principally owe the talents and the means with which God has supplied them; and to this zeal the Association is indebted, not only for encouragement and support,
but

but for some of its most eloquent and useful publications.

From the French academies and seminaries of learning, have issued forth the most numerous and formidable enemies, that religion and the order of things established on its principles have had to contend with. To proselyte them to the cause was, as we have seen, an early object of impious zeal to the most infuriate of the apostles of infidelity; and they soon became their most successful associates in *enlightening youth*—the great promise and instrument of their success. Thanks be to God, we can boast of better things. From our great seminary of education, this institution derives the most strenuous and effective support. From its learned retreats have issued some of the most skilful and ardent of the associated combatants, who defend the cause of religion and virtue. In every branch, in every department they divide their time and their talents, between their laborious academical occupations and the great objects of the union; and from the annals of the Association shall never be effaced those splendid compositions, by which my predecessors in this place, all members of that body, so powerfully and effectually acquitted themselves of the duty which I have attempted this day.

These I cannot but contemplate as the first fruits of that happy revolution in our university; that new

era in her annals that restored her highest academical distinctions to religion, and reviving the spirit of her antient institutes, placed a minister of the gospel, long tried, and highly valued by all her sons, in the chair of her presidency.

Blessings from God, and honor from the king, on those who thus had the wisdom to discern what would most secure her usefulness to the state, and the firmness and the patriotism to adopt and establish it; who rescued her administration from the grasp of political intrigue, and the pursuit of political talents, and committed it into those hands with which the pious founders of the institution ordained that it should rest, as if they had foreseen the doctrine of our days, to separate education from religion, and to withdraw the youth from the hands of the ministers of the gospel.

Equal blessings and equal honors be their reward, who in the discharge of the sacred trust of providing for the succession of the chief shepherds of the fold of Christ, and the government of the church, have classed the members of that venerable body among the objects of their choice. It was an example worthy of their character, and of the whole tenor of their conduct; and, I trust, it will be binding upon their successors. For what can more powerfully contribute to encourage amongst us the cultivation of all that is connected with the proper discharge of the duties

duties belonging to the sacred ministry ? It shews that a share in the highest honors of the church, is henceforward reserved to a proficiency in those sciences, that give ornament and utility to our profession, and that a character of learning, and of exemplary morals, and habits of order and discipline, will henceforth outweigh the aspiring pretensions of unqualified ambition, and the forward importunities of powerful interests, working only for worldly views.

Having fixed your attention so long on this subject of the college, I should hold myself inexcusable were I to pass unnoticed that exertion of zeal that was so successfully opposed to the first daring attempt made within its walls, to imitate the arch-corrupters of France, in what is most execrable and truly satanic in their system. The attempt to *enlighten the youth* of this island ; the attempt to infuse the mixed poison of Atheism and democracy, charged with all their horrors, into the youthful and yet untainted blood of the rising generation. Signal are the obligations, and great the gratitude which the state owes to the * principal actor in this mixed scene of grief and consolation, as he has himself described it, nor will religion, for this his act, refuse him from this place her tribute of praise. May the work he has performed be permanent ! be eternal ! May no infamous

* The Lord Chancellor.

seducer evermore cross that hallowed threshold, to pollute the virgin hope of the state! May no infectious hand evermore attempt to taint that fountain, from which should flow, as from a perennial stream of *living waters*, every art, and every science, and every acquirement that can improve, adorn, or dignify a Christian community.

How intimately these exertions to preserve our principal seat of learning from the infectious spirit of the day, are connected with the objects of your institution, or how much they are intitled to your gratitude and applause who engage in such occupations, I need not observe to you. They are occupations worthy high stations, worthy high characters, worthy distinguished talents. Here every man should co-operate who has the heart of a father, the spirit of a Christian, or the principles of a patriot. Only let us be consistent. While such exertions are making to preserve the purity of the young generation within their academic bounds, let us beware how we make equal exertions, as it were, to corrupt and vitiate them at every excursion they take into society. Shall they receive no lessons but those of virtue and religion, and see no examples but those of irreligion and vice? Shall it be incessantly inculcated to them, that religion is the only solid basis on which the happiness and prosperity of the society of which they are to be members can be built, and yet, whenever they look into that society, shall they have to answer,

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that

that they can scarce find a trace of religion to attract their ardent eyes, or awaken their vivid hopes? Shall it be incessantly inculcated to them, that to the decay of Christianity, to the neglect of its observances, and a departure from the pure morals it prescribes, is to be attributed that spirit of anarchy and licentiousness that darkens all the prospects of their rising day, that convulses the world, on which they are just entering, and that produces all those horrors, at which their young and unpractised minds instinctively recoil; and yet, shall the saddest proofs of that decay obtrude themselves upon their observation in every circle into which they are initiated, whether social or domestic? Shall they search in vain to discover any practical conviction of the necessity of those observances, or of the obligation of those morals, among those to whom they naturally look for rules of life and models of conduct? Between such manifest contradictions, how are they to steer? How are they to reconcile the theory of their instructors with the practice of a parent, of a near and dear relative, of a guardian, a protector, or a friend?

It is time to put an end to this idle, this dangerous, this destructive trifling! the objects of it are too sacred, too dear to our hearts, too precious to our country! The order of things that has lulled us into the fatal indifference to religion, and to every thing connected with religion, which has so long
recon-

reconciled us to these and similar contradictions, so as to make them habitual and scarce perceptible to us—that order of things is past. This indifference has itself most fatally contributed to reduce us to a state in which all this must be changed, or we perish. Neither to our children nor to the people, must we, henceforward, set such examples as shall lead them to suppose that religion is but a device to keep the one in tutelage, and the other in subjection. Nothing can be more unjust, or treacherous, or cruel to both : and it is an injustice, a treachery, and a cruelty, that will at the last recoil upon ourselves. No ; all must see that we are in earnest in this essential point, as in every thing else that can promise to rescue us from the dangers with which we are surrounded. All must see that we are roused into a sense of our situation ; that however securely and carelessly we may have sailed down the tide, while all was calm and serene around us, we are now braced up and prepared for the storm that rages.—We have too active, too restless, too ardent an enemy, any longer to repose in laziness, and inertia, and pusillanimity, the fatal effects of a long and unmenaced possession of our blessings. The sacred trust we have to defend, for ourselves and for our posterity, must be guarded, as it is opposed, with warmth, with passion, with enthusiasm. The heart must burn in its cause, or we must be content, tamely and cowardly, to surrender it into the hands of a cruel and implacable enemy.

These, my respected brethren of the Association, these are the sentiments and these the feelings with which the active members of your society pursue the great objects of your institution. Thus warm, thus ardent, thus impassioned are all their exertions in the sacred cause which you are leagued to defend. They well know, that no evil of the magnitude of that against which you struggle, was ever yet averted, no blessing of the extent for which you contend, ever yet secured, but by ardent spirits, and glowing hearts, and nervous arms, bringing into action every moral and physical engine, and combining in an unity of efforts worthy of the prize for which they engage.

O! that God in his returning mercy would diffuse a similar spirit over the whole face of the land! That their fervor, their zeal, their enterprize, might be communicated to every rank, and condition, and order of the state! That all who are most deeply interested in the success of your hallowed league, and from whose countenance and co-operation you have a right to expect the most vigorous and effective support, might learn, from this day, to see with you *the things that really make for their peace*, and seeing, *seek and ensue them*. Great is their responsibility. *They are set up for the ruin or the salvation of many*. Let them see to it.

For you, my respected brethren, I shall conclude with the prayer with which Nehemiah closes the account

count of all his exertions in the same cause in which you are engaged; the cause of rescuing his native land from vice and irreligion, and in rescuing it from vice and irreligion, securing its peace and its safety—*Remember them, O my God! for this, and wipe not out the good deeds they have done for the house of their God, and for the observations thereof; but remember them for good.*

F I N I S.

A P P E N D I X.

DURING the eventful period of the two last years, the public mind has been so agitated and engrossed by circumstances of momentous national importance, that little room, or indeed inclination, has been left for the exercise of the powers of unprejudiced reason and deliberate discussion—powers indispensably requisite to arrange, mature, and give effect to those *objects* in which, from the nature of their institution, the Association are peculiarly interested. The still small voice of reason can scarcely be heard among the jarring interests of contending parties, but is totally lost amid the din of arms, and the convulsions of war. Such has been, and indeed in some degree, is still the situation of the Association: yet amidst this tumult of distress and agitation, they have not been unmindful of this great and fundamental truth, the basis of their institution, *That righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people.*

In the humble hope therefore, of impressing this awful truth on the public mind, they have still endeavoured to bring forward those subjects in immediate connection with it, and to which they had originally devoted their attention;—among the principal of these was

THE DISSEMINATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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The peculiar circumstances of the times must here, as in general, be their plea, for not having pursued this object with the same *ardour* with which it was undertaken. Something however has yet been done. The sum of *fifty pounds* has been granted by the Association, for the purpose of reducing the price of New Testaments, so as to bring the knowledge of the *Gospel* within the purchase of the lowest class of society; thus endeavouring to bring into effect the benevolent intention of the original institution, "That there should not be a cottage in the whole kingdom, in which there is a single person who can read, destitute of the holy scriptures." A scheme of more doubtful event, but suggested by the same Christian spirit, has been offered to their consideration,—that of *printing a number of testaments in the Irish language*, for the use of the poor natives. This was presented to them in a season better adapted for such attempts than the present; and as an encouragement to the learned author of the plan, the Association granted him *ten guineas*, to enable him to carry it into execution. This business however, like others of a similar nature, must be suspended during the present juncture. It is only mentioned, as a proof, if such were wanting, that whenever circumstances permitted, the Association has embraced every opportunity, however difficult in execution, or dubious in the event, *to disseminate the knowledge of the holy scriptures*.

With this object is intimately connected *the attainment of a more* DUE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH. To this great end the Association have directed their most strenuous exertions; and they trust they have not been unattended with beneficial effects. In this immediate *cause of God*, and of *Religion*, they have endeavoured, by personal or written application, to engage the interest of every rank and class of society

ciety—to obtain, by the exertion of the executive power, a due enforcement of the laws on this subject—to engage the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authority, in favour of a plan for this purpose, submitted to the consideration of the clergy of Ireland; and convinced of the powerful influence of the example of the higher classes on society in general, they have endeavoured to awaken in their breasts the *best* and *strongest* energies of the human mind; and by every motive of duty, religion, nay even of policy, to excite sentiments of veneration for the sanctity of the sabbath, and a due observance of its sacred duties. But the views of the Association on this head, and the variety and extent of their exertions to carry them into effect, have been delineated with such perspicuity, and traced by so masterly a hand, in the sermon to which this is annexed, that to add information to the subject would be an hopeless, and to repeat what has already been said, an unnecessary task.

The next immediate object of the attention of the Association, was

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF YOUTH.

To remedy any defects in the present system, and to impress with more energy on the docile mind of youth, the great and fundamental truths of religion is of so much importance to the well-being and happiness of society, as to engage the most serious concern of the Association; and they therefore deputed a select committee of their body, to confer with the society of literary teachers on this subject. These gentlemen received their deputation, and seconded their views with the warmest interest and cordiality; and having communicated with several teachers of eminence, both of the metropolis and the country, it

is now become an object of rational and well-founded hope, that by the union of their talents and endeavours, a system will be formed, which will combine the advantages of a learned with those of a religious education, and render the pupil at once a Scholar and a Christian.

Catechetical lectures form so necessary and important a part of religious education, that they have ever particularly engaged the attention of the Association; and even during this period of anxiety and apprehension, have been pursued with the same zeal, and not less success than formerly—in so much, that in one parish alone in this metropolis, no less than 150 children have attended these lectures. Anxious to extend the benefit of this plan, they have communicated it to their clerical members in the country, and earnestly pressed it on their attention; and such has been the happy effect of this measure, that several applications have been made and granted, for the bibles and medals appropriated by the Association, to the best answerers at such lectures.

Under this head of religious education, it may also be proper to mention, that the Association have turned their thoughts to a plan for the establishment of a *Seminary for parish clerks, and schoolmasters for country charity schools*. The general ignorance and incapacity of both these classes has been universally acknowledged and lamented, and the gross misconduct of many of the latter has been attended with the most pernicious consequences to society. But as the magnitude and importance of this subject will probably engage the attention of the legislature, it is sufficient for the Association to have mentioned it,

The Reform of the Criminal Poor, being either youthful convicts themselves, or the children of criminal

minial parents, is an institution which emanated from the Association, has been fostered by them with peculiar care, and received from them occasional grants for its support. A detail of its peculiar objects, its regulations and success, would therefore naturally form a distinguished part of this statement; but that the subject has been already anticipated and committed to the public, in an address from the committee, a report of its funds, and in a charity sermon preached for its support, in which the nature and extent of the institution have been so clearly defined, its circumstances so accurately explained, and the arguments in its favour urged with such strength of reason and persuasive eloquence, as to supersede the necessity of any further detail.

The connection between religious education and moral conduct is so intimate, that in directing their views to the one, the Association could not overlook the other; and aware of the influence that the hope of reward naturally possesses over the human mind, particularly in the lower classes of society, they availed themselves of this means to stimulate them to a perseverance in good conduct, by forming a *Plan for the encouragement of servants*. For this purpose subscriptions were undertaken to create a fund, the produce of which should be appropriated in annual pensions, to those servants who had faithfully fulfilled the duties of their several stations, in proportion to the number of years they had served, and the original sum subscribed. This plan has been already communicated to the public, through the medium of the papers, and has received the approbation, and been encouraged by the subscriptions, of several of the most exalted and respectable characters in the kingdom; under whose protection little doubt can be entertained that, in the event of peace, it will be carried into full effect.

LOTTERY

LOTTERY INSURANCE is an evil of such magnitude, attended with such pernicious consequences, and at the same time so calculated to seduce the minds and to inflame the passions of the lower orders of society, that the Association considered themselves called upon to exert their best endeavours to check its baneful and alarming progress; but as the success of such endeavours must principally depend on accommodating them to the capacities and feelings of the parties interested, short, but affecting tales and essays, setting forth the ruinous consequences of such practices, in a style adapted to readers of this class, and advertisements, exposing the fallacy of such calculations, and the almost certain loss to the credulous adventurers, were occasionally published and distributed. The success of such attempts cannot be ascertained; but if by these means a single family, or even one individual has been rescued from ruin, surely *our labour has not been in vain, nor have we lost our reward.*

To pursue the probable success of these efforts, and to impress on the minds of persons of this description the happy effects of a contrary conduct, and its natural tendency to promote the happiness of themselves, their families, and society, the Association published a variety of small tracts, to the amount of 300,000, which may be classed under the head of

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

And when the great enemies of religion and of mankind, endeavoured to sap the vitals of Christianity, by publications of the most dangerous and irreligious tendency, the Association exerted their most strenuous efforts to counteract their endeavours, and to provide and disseminate an antidote to the
poison

poison, by publishing extracts from the works of Bishops Horne and Watson, Mr. Erskine's argument against Paine, and other writings of a similar nature.

Such have been the objects, and such the *efforts* of the Association for their attainment, in a season of tumult and danger, of anxiety and apprehension. But now when it has pleased the Almighty, who alone can still the unruly minds of men, to mitigate the horrors of war, and to open to our view the prospect of internal peace and tranquillity, the Association consider themselves bound, by every tie of gratitude and duty, to redouble their efforts and diligence: they therefore call upon every member of their institution, to co-operate with them in this labour of love; such as are residents in town, by their personal attendance and advice—such as are absent, by literary communications—and *all* by their influence and authority, by precept and example, to fulfil the great purposes of this institution, by discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Practice of Religion and Virtue.

Receipts and Payments of the Affociation
for discountenancing Vice, and promot-
ing the Practice of Religion and Virtue,
from 25th July, 1796, (when the last
Account was published) to 1st June, 1798.

R E C E I P T S.

	£.	s.	d.
Balance in favour of the Affociation, 25th } July, 1796 - - -	58	8	8½
Subscriptions - - -	322	9	7½
Donation from his Grace the Lord Primate - - -	22	15	0
Tracts and pamphlets sold - - -	18	1	0
	£.421	14	4

P A Y M E N T S.

£. s. d.

Printing the following tracts, &c. saleable at reduced prices, and distributed gratis			
1000 Sermon, preached before the Affo- ciation, by the Rev. Wm. Magee, 5th May, 1796	-	-	-
1000 Graves's Hints on Education, 2d edi- tion	-	-	-
600 Watson's Apology for the Bible, 2d edition	-	-	-
750 Bishop of Offory's Circular Letter to his Clergy	-	-	-
750 Erskine's Speech against the Publisher of Paine's Age of Reason	-	-	-
2000 Queries on the Sacrament, 3d edi- tion	-	-	-
13000 Tracts and Hand-bills against Lot- tery Insurance	-	-	-
500 Address for the Encouragement of Servants	-	-	-
500 Expostulation on the Observance of the Sabbath	-	-	-
300 Resolutions for the Observance of the Sabbath	-	-	-
Subscription towards printing part of the New Testament in Irish and English	11	7	6
Premiums and other expences incurred by catechetical examinations in 1797 and 1798	21	1	0
Contribution towards the support of the Reform of the Criminal Poor	50	0	0
Contribution towards the support of a Shool for Soldiers' Children	24	19	4½
Advertising	23	10	6
Printing and Stationary	22	11	5½
Assistant Secretary and Messenger	99	5	6½
Incidental and petty charges	6	17	7
Balance in favour of the Association, 1st June, 1798	74	0	7½

£.421 14 4

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The following Publications of the Right Rev. THOMAS LEWIS O'BEIRNE, Lord Bishop of *Offory*,
PRINTED BY WILLIAM WATSON AND SON,
No. 7, CAPEL-STREET.

1. A SERMON, preached for the benefit of the Sunday School at Roscommon, on Sunday 28th February, 1798.

2. A Sermon, preached in the parish church of Longford, on Friday 19th of April, 1793, being the day appointed for the General Fast,

3. A Sermon, preached in the church of Longford, on 28th February, 1794, being the day appointed for the General Fast.

4. A Charge to the Clergy of the diocese of Offory, at his Primary Visitation, 1795.

5. A Charge to the Clergy of the diocese of Offory, at his Annual Visitation, 1796.

6. A Charge to the Clergy of the diocese of Offory, at his Annual Visitation, 1797.

7. A Sermon, preached at St. Mary's Kilkenny, on Sunday 8th January, 1797, on the providential dispersion of the enemy's fleet, and the deliverance of this kingdom from the threatened invasion.

8. A Circular Letter to the Clergy of his diocese, 1797.

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9. A Sermon, preached before his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant and both Houses of Parliament, on Tuesday the 16th of January, 1798, being the day appointed for a General Thanksgiving.